

# What You Need to Know about Monkeypox and Children

## What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is an illness caused by a virus that can spread from person to person. However, it is not spread as easily as COVID-19, or other common childhood viral illnesses. Children are at low risk of getting it. So far, the vast majority of cases (around 98 percent) are in adult men who acquired the virus through intimate contact with other men, but anyone can get monkeypox.

## How is monkeypox spread?

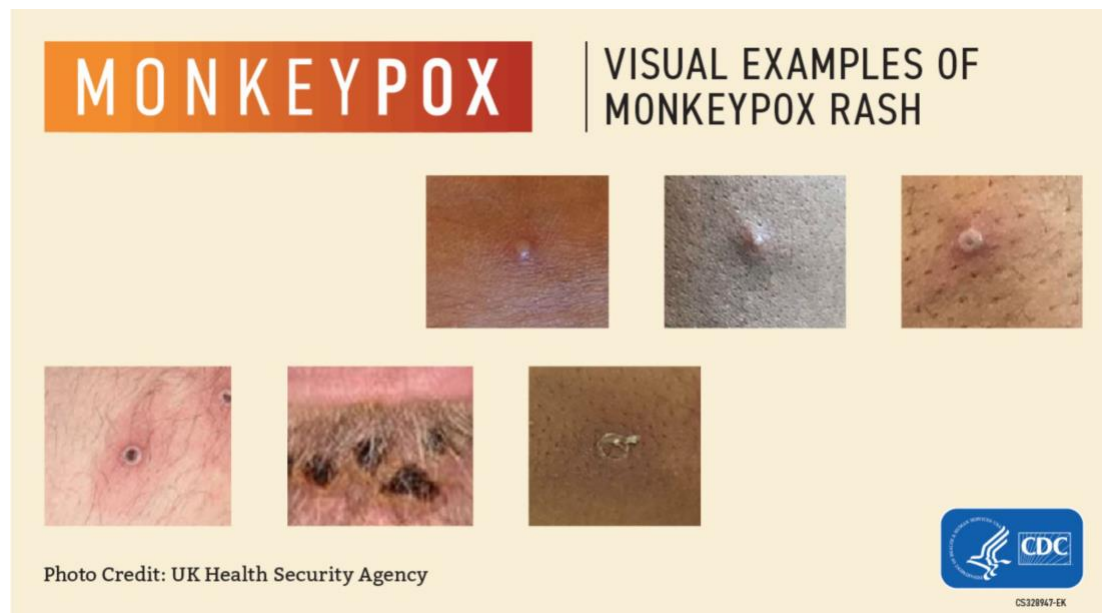
Monkeypox may spread through close, personal, usually skin-to-skin contact, including:

- Direct contact with monkeypox rash, scabs, or body fluids from a person with monkeypox, including sexual contact.
- Touching objects, fabrics (clothing, bedding or towels), and surfaces that have been used by someone with monkeypox.
- Contact with respiratory secretions.
- The highest risk activity at this time is sex with multiple or anonymous partners.

## What are the symptoms of monkeypox in children?

Rash is the most common monkeypox symptom, and it can look like similar to rashes that are seen in kids, like chickenpox or herpes. The rash typically begins as scattered, raised, and reddish, and then may look like fluid-filled bumps, pustules, and scabs.

All parts of the rash will look the same at the same time, which makes it different from other conditions like chickenpox. The rash can be painful. Sometimes before the rash appears, people have fever, swollen lymph nodes, fatigue, and headache. Symptoms usually start within 3 weeks of exposure to the virus.



## Are there any symptoms of monkeypox that have to be present in order for it to be monkeypox? If my child has a fever but no rash, should I be less worried?

The rash is one of the most common presentations seen with this virus. Some people will also have fever, swollen lymph nodes, and tiredness.

## When should a child be tested for monkeypox?

Anyone with symptoms of monkeypox should talk to their child's doctor. Doctors who suspect monkeypox based on the appearance of rash and a child's history will consult with infectious disease experts and/or local public health authorities to determine if testing is indicated.

## How worried do I need to be about monkeypox risk, for example, compared to RSV, chickenpox, or flu?

Some common illnesses have a seasonal pattern, and there can be increases in cases when kids go back to school and are in closer proximity to each other. This is true of illnesses like influenza, RSV, and chickenpox. For diseases that have a regular vaccination available, like flu and chickenpox, it is helpful for everyone to vaccinate in order to protect themselves and their loved ones from getting sick or having complications from the disease. Even in years when the flu vaccine is not a perfect match, it decreases the risk of getting very sick and dying from flu. The COVID-19 vaccine also decreases the risk of serious illness.

Right now, kids are not at high risk for contracting monkeypox. Most cases have been related to close skin-to-skin contact, especially during intimate or sexual contact. However, anyone with close skin-to-skin contact with someone who is sick with monkeypox could be at risk. This is why it's so important to stay home when you are sick, practice frequent hand-washing, and follow the latest information from public health and healthcare professionals.

Parents of older children may want to bring up monkeypox proactively in conversations they have with their teens about sex, since one of the main ways it is spreading right now is through intimate contact. Close physical contact during sexual activities, as well as when kissing or cuddling, can spread the virus.

## If monkeypox is spread through close contact, how can my child be safe at school or childcare? Kids are always playing closely with each other.

It is important for kids to play together but it is also true that some viruses and bacteria can be spread from close contact. That is exactly why it's so important that kids stay home when they're sick and practice frequent hand-washing. Schools and childcare facilities should also continue to do regular environmental cleaning of surfaces and toys that helps to reduce the spread of all kinds of germs. Monkeypox virus is being spread by close skin-to-skin contact and cases among kids are not common so far. What is very important is the follow-up by public health officials that is done when a case is recognized. This helps to limit further spread.

## If my child has a rash and I'm not sure what it is, do I have to keep my child at home?

There are many rashes that might be contagious, so we recommend that you see your child's doctor if you are concerned. Also, in many situations, keeping rashes covered sometimes helps to prevent spread, no matter the cause.

## Can people spread monkeypox even when they have no symptoms?

Although the incubation period can be 1-3 weeks, a person does not appear to be contagious during this period. They are contagious when they have symptoms.

## What about sports such as wrestling?

If a case is identified that increases the risk for a group like wrestlers or a similar activity, public health professionals will provide advice on adjusting or pausing those activities to reduce risk. It is always important to continue the regular environmental and surface cleaning that prevents the spread of disease. A child who has a new rash or doesn't feel well should not participate in group activities.

## Do kids need a vaccine for monkeypox?

Right now the risk to the general public is low. The vaccine that protects against monkeypox is being given to people who have had close contact with someone who is sick with monkeypox. It should be given within 4 days of exposure. Focusing on these close contacts helps create a "ring" of protection to keep the virus from spreading further. Only people who are at high risk because of an exposure or because they belong to a high risk group (like men who have sex with men) are recommended to receive the vaccine right now.

If someone has had close contact with someone with monkeypox, they will be offered the vaccine (including kids). Otherwise, it is not necessary for everyone to have this vaccine right now.